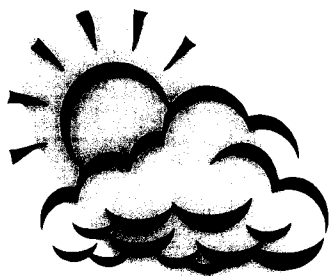


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Articles in Today's Clips

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

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Tuesday, November 8, 2005

Missing: 2,400 Michigan molesters Sex offenders break the law by moving without notifying police of their new addresses, state finds.

By Charlie Cain / Detroit News Lansing Bureau

LANSING -- Michigan police have lost track of more than 2,400 convicted sex offenders who moved and failed to report their new addresses within 10 days as required by law.

The offenders are listed on the Michigan Sex Offender Registry so residents can keep tabs on sex offenders in their neighborhoods. They could face additional four-year felony charges for ducking under the police radar screen.

In addition, 5,941 other sex offenders failed to confirm their addresses to local police agencies and may -- or may not -- be staying where police think they do, according to the latest numbers compiled by the Michigan State Police. Those offenders face 93-day misdemeanor penalties.

By law, persons convicted on sex-related charges must confirm their addresses -- four times a year for those convicted of felonies and once a year for those who committed misdemeanor offenses. Most of those listed on the registry are required to report to local police for 25 years.

The large-scale failure to comply troubles Beth Morrison, president and CEO of HAVEN, Oakland County's sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse counseling center based in Pontiac.

"One of the pieces we always strive for in our work is holding perpetrators accountable, and it's hard to hold them accountable if you don't know where they are," Morrison said.

"I know survivors, as well as parents of young kids who have been abused, who use the registry as a way to keep track of where perpetrators are. And not being able to rely on that information could certainly add to their stress."

The Sex Offender Registry, created by the state in 1994, listed a record 37,916 offenders as of Nov. 3. The number grows by an average of 200 each month, according to state officials.

Among those on the registry, 23,885 are required to keep authorities informed of their whereabouts. Those who are incarcerated or have left the state don't have to report. As of Oct. 15, the end of the latest two-week reporting period, better than one-third of them -- 8,346 -- are officially listed as "absconders."

Shanon Akans, a spokeswoman for the state police, which maintains the Sex Offender Registry, said the state does not provide money to help local police departments track down wayward sex offenders. She noted that state, county and local police agencies have many other duties. "(The registry) is a priority, but one of many police priorities," Akans said.

Akans said the state police did decide to allocate manpower from all 63 of its posts to work with local police departments on a first-of-its-kind, voluntary statewide sweep to see if sex offenders are where they are supposed to be. That three-week effort ended last week. She said a report on the success of that operation is being compiled and will likely be available Thursday.

"Significant time and effort went into this effort to increase compliance with the registry," said Akans, who added that she had no way of estimating how many missing or late-reporting sex offenders may have been located.

Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard, who as a member of the Michigan Legislature played a role in the creation of the Sex Offender Registry, said he would like to see state grants to allow local police to more aggressively pursue sex offenders who don't report.

"It's real frustrating, because the fact is that you have more than 8,300 people out there who have committed a crime (by failing to confirm addresses or reporting new ones)," Bouchard said. "It makes me want to know where they are and what they are doing."

Bouchard said the registry, despite its flaws, still is a valuable tool since most convicted sex offenders are in compliance with the law. "At least in those cases the public has the information and is aware of the potential threat in their midst."

The sheriff is also pleased that since May, the registry has been adding photographs of sex offenders to the list and is more than two-thirds of the way to completion. Before that, the information on an offender was limited to name, age, physical description, address and brief history of sex offenses.

The registry has proven enormously popular with Michigan residents. Since its inception, more than 18 million "hits" have been recorded on the Sex Offender Registry Web site. The site allows a visitor to search by ZIP code or name to identify registered sex offenders.

The Sex Offender Registry is a tool for law enforcement agencies to keep tabs on convicted sex offenders in their communities and have a ready-made list of potential suspects in sex crimes.

The law was expanded in 1996 to allow citizens to review the list at local police departments to determine if sex offenders were living in their neighborhood so they could take precautions.

In 1999, the registry was posted online.

Meagan's Law, allowing citizens the right to know if neighbors are sex criminals, was adopted by all 50 states in the aftermath of the 1994 rape and murder of Meagan Kanka of New Jersey.

The assailant of the 7-year-old girl was a convicted child molester who had moved across the street from her parents' home. The parents and others in the neighborhood had no idea of the man's violent criminal past.

Another change ushered in during that era was a reluctance on the part of the Michigan Parole Board to allow sex offenders easy parole. In 1990, the board granted parole to 47 percent of eligible inmates serving time for sex crimes.

Last year, the number had dwindled to 13 percent, said Russ Marlin, a spokesman for the Michigan Department of Corrections. By comparison, 34 percent of other violent offenders were granted parole, as were 69 percent of nonviolent offenders and 79 percent of drug offenders.

"Sex offenders by nature and history are often violent, brutal people who have done things that have devastated individuals, families and communities," said Marlin, a former parole officer who supervised sex offenders in Detroit.

Marlin said that 11,542 people are serving time in Michigan prisons for sex offenses, nearly 24 percent of Michigan's total prison population of 49,000.

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Police say 2,405 Michigan sex offenders don't report new addresses

11/8/2005, 2:06 a.m. ET

The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Police don't know how to find 2,405 convicted sex offenders who failed to report their new addresses within 10 days of moving as the law requires, according to state police.

Also, 5,941 others on the Michigan Sex Offender Registry didn't confirm their addresses to local police, the latest state police statistics show. Authorities therefore are unsure whether those offenders still live at their addresses of record.

State law says that people convicted of sex-related felonies must confirm their addresses four times a year. Those convicted of sex-related misdemeanors must report once a year. Most of those on the registry must report to local police for 25 years.

A sex offender's failure to confirm an address is a misdemeanor that carries a penalty of up to 93 days in jail. Failure to report a move is a felony carrying a sentence of up to four years in prison.

Michigan created the registry in 1994. It had 37,916 names on Thursday. Of that total, 23,885 are required to report their addresses. Those in prison or out of state need not report.

On Oct. 15, 8,346, or 35 percent of the 23,885, were listed as "absconders."

For three weeks through last week, personnel from all 63 state police posts were assigned to work with local police to see if sex offenders lived at their registered addresses.

A report on the results likely will be released Thursday, state police spokeswoman Shanon Akans told The Detroit News.

"Significant time and effort went into this effort to increase compliance with the registry," said Akans.

Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard is a former state legislator and helped start the registry. He said he would like to see state grants to help local police pursue those who fail to report.

"It's real frustrating, because the fact is that you have more than 8,300 people out there who have committed a crime" by failing to confirm or report addresses, Bouchard said. "It makes me want to know where they are and what they are doing."

A state audit released July 8 said Michigan's sex offender records contained inaccurate and incomplete information that may give the public a false sense of security.

Auditors said state police lacked procedures to verify the accuracy of data, including sex offenders' names and addresses.

This year, the names of Michigan sex offenders also became available on the U.S. Justice Department's National Sex Offender Public Registry.

The new national registry lets people search for sex offenders outside state boundaries without having to visit each state's individual registry.

On the Net:

National Sex Offender Public Registry: <http://www.nsopr.gov>

Michigan Public Sex Offender Registry: <http://www.mipsor.state.mi.us>

Information from: The Detroit News, <http://www.detnews.com>

The Holland Sentinel
Tuesday, November 8, 2005

Abuse victim's mother sues day care

The former operator of an Olive Township day-care business that lost its license because a man had sexually assaulted one of the day care's clients, is being sued by the victim's mother, according to Ottawa County court records.

The 7-year-old's mother is asking for unspecified damages, alleging that Victoria Kooienga and her former Shining Stars Day Care center in the 10700 block of Blair Street failed to protect her daughter from being molested by Kooienga's then-15-year-old son.

The teen pleaded guilty in January 2004 to first-degree criminal sexual conduct, admitting that he had assaulted the 7-year-old. He was sentenced as a juvenile to probation.

The lawsuit alleges that the girl's mother dropped her off at Shining Stars between 7:30 and 8 a.m. on Oct. 7, 2003, but Kooienga was not present and the girl was left in her teenage son's care.

The lawsuit was filed on Friday. Kooienga has not filed a response.

Kids' violent deaths tied to who's at home

Free NEW YORK TIMES

Living with an unrelated adult, especially an unrelated man, substantially increases the risk that a child will die violently, researchers reported Monday.

According to the study, children who live with one or more adults who are not biologically

related are nearly 50 times as likely to die at the adults' hands as children who live with two biological parents, the researchers said.

The study, published in the November issue of *Pediatrics*, examined the cases of children younger than 5 who died in Missouri from 1992 to 1999.

Children who lived in single-

parent households or with foster parents or stepparents were at no greater risk of dying at their hands than children who lived with two biological parents.

But the presence of male adults unrelated to the victims sharply increased the risk of fatal maltreatment.

'Suspicious character' seen

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

The Grand Rapids Press

GRANDVILLE -Grandville Public Schools is warning parents about a "suspicious character" who was watching children as he sat in a car near Riverbend Elementary School last week. Police in other communities report similar behavior by someone driving the same car, a mid-90s burgundy Oldsmobile, Superintendent Ron Caniff said. Police talked to the man and know his address. "We feel compelled to share this information, even if it is a false alarm," Caniff said in a letter.

Doctor's suspension overturned

Judge blasts state for delays in case vs. chiropractor

FENTON TOWNSHIP

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

By Ron Fonger

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FENTON - A Fenton chiropractor accused of massaging the breasts of two teenage girls who were his employees and patients is back in business, and a judge says delays by the state Department of Community Health in attempting to strip him of his license were "inexcusable."

The decision Monday by Administrative Law Judge Erick Williams means Dr. Robert J. Moore can return to work- at least until a full hearing - and probably will, his attorney said.

"A summary suspension was not appropriate. ... (The decision) was something we were hoping for," said Richard C. Kraus, Moore's attorney. Moore, 40, a chiropractor at TLC Chiropractic Care, 1549 N. Leroy St., has been accused by the state attorney general's office of negligence, incompetence and lack of good moral character for allegedly having provided unorthodox breast manipulations of the two girls.

He has denied touching the girls inappropriately, and his attorneys argued that the complaints against him were too old to warrant an emergency license suspension by the Department of Community Health in September. Williams agreed, criticizing the state Department of Community Health's slow handling of the complaint, saying the state must take formal action within four months of it having been filed or else dismiss it.

The Flint Journal was unable to reach a spokesman for the department for comment.

In Moore's case, the state did not act against the doctor until a year after a Fenton police detective brought the case, almost ready-made, to the state's attention, the judge wrote.

"The delays in this case prior to the summary suspension order were, in other words, inexcusable. Standing alone, those delays would not be enough to warrant dismissal of the Moore complaint," Williams' 14-page decision said. "But combined with a summary suspension, which is clearly prejudicial, they might be."

Williams said the emergency suspension amounted to punishment before Moore had even been charged with a crime.

QUICK TAKE

What the decision means Dr. Robert J. Moore's license is back in place, allowing him to see patients again, at least until a more extensive disciplinary hearing.

A temporary suspension of the license had been issued by the state Department of Community Health on Sept. 26 but was dissolved Monday by an administrative law judge.

A full hearing could move ahead later this month, an attorney for the doctor said Monday.

"At its root, this is a case of one person's word against another's, and as Mr. Kraus argued, that is what trials are for. It would be unfair to punish Dr. Moore before he has a chance to present a defense," Williams wrote.

"What Dr. Moore is really accused of is a crime. And everybody understands what it is. He allegedly abused his status as a chiropractor to touch patients' breasts for purposes of sexual gratification or stimulation. ... Dr. Moore is under investigation for that crime. He has not been convicted. He has not even been charged. ... Punishing Dr. Moore at this stage is premature."

The first complaint against Moore came in 2003 by a former 16-year-old file clerk who said the doctor told her that her breasts were uneven and needed an adjustment.

The state's complaint says Moore pushed on the girl's breast bone and cleavage with his fingers for approximately 10 minutes during one of several manipulations.

In 2004, another teenage file clerk had breast adjustments at Moore's home, where she worked as a baby sitter, the girl testified in October.

In the October hearings, the director of insurance and government relations with the Michigan Chiropractic Society testified that Michigan limits chiropractic care to treating spinal problems, back pain, neck pain and other joint dysfunction, but that "never involves manipulating breast tissue."

Reading comes first

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

By Jessi De La Cruz

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Most students at two Jackson elementary schools are getting an intensive course of literacy under the federally backed Reading First grant.

The grant, which gives Jackson schools about \$231,000 each year of its three-year life, offers students help in reading comprehension, distinguishing sounds and learning vocabulary. It is part of a nationwide push for literacy.

This is the first year Jackson Public Schools received the grant for Wilson Elementary School and McCulloch Academy. Organizers say the mandatory minimum of spending 90 minutes daily on literacy is good for students and educators.

"Teachers really get to know their kids," said Kim Rokita, literacy coach at McCulloch Academy. "They know what they know and don't know."

Teachers organize students in small groups to work on specific literacy skills such as oral reading or comprehension, Rokita said. Students are tested three times yearly to see where they need help.

"We take them from where they are at and fill in the gaps," Rokita said.

McCulloch Academy teacher Vicky Gorsuch said participating in Reading First is challenging but has already produced noticeable results.

"At first I doubted," said Gorsuch, who teaches a first- and second-grade class. "I see a definite difference from who they were in the beginning of the year."

Students in kindergarten through third grade participate in Reading First. Much of the grant money goes toward paying the literacy coaches' salaries and teacher training.

"What we do is really intense," Gorsuch said. "The (literacy) coaches are expected to work themselves out of a job."

Grants are awarded based on educational and financial need as well as guidelines under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Under the act, students are required to know how to read by the end of third grade.

In addition to training, teachers receive additional reading materials for their classrooms under the program, said Linda Larry-Robinson, the district's before- and after-school site coordinator.

"It gives teachers the extra support in teaching the children how to read," Larry-Robinson said.

Gorsuch is in favor of the program even though it requires her to stretch her class time to fit everything in.

"There's a lot going on," she said. "But I think the kids are going to get a lot out of it."

Society

November 8, 2005

Parties announcing parties start fund-raising season

By Chuck Bennett / Special to The Detroit News

The North American International Auto Show Charity Preview and the parties surrounding it are undoubtedly some of most anticipated events of the year. And even though the main event doesn't take place until Jan. 13, parties announcing the parties have already begun.

On Oct. 23, Matrix Human Services sponsored a kickoff reception to A Jazzy Afterglow, that organization's largest fund-raiser, which takes place on preview night. An intimate group of about 80 people gathered in the Casgrain Hall ballroom for hors d'oeuvres and beverages as the steering committee was announced. General Motors Corp. was recognized as the exclusive title sponsor, and other corporations were encouraged to participate as sponsors.

Entertainment was provided by singer Chenethia Wooten, a Matrix employee, and saxophone player Marty Montgomery. Radio personality, Sandy Kovach of Smooth Jazz V98.7 (WVMV-FM), was the emcee.

Matrix programs reach out to abused and neglected adolescent girls, provide shelter for runaway teenagers, computer classes and recreational activities for at-risk youth, and medical appointment transportation and chore services for senior citizens. It is one of the oldest and largest nonprofit social service organizations in Michigan.

What's coming up

The Art of the Table Benefactor Gala, Cranbrook House's Holiday Tables premiere, is Thursday evening at a residence at Turtle Lake in Bloomfield Hills. The event will feature a strolling cocktail reception. Tickets are \$150 and include Nov. 17 entry to the Patron Tea at Cranbrook House. Information: (248) 645-3149.

Detroit Symphony Orchestra Volunteer Council's 23rd annual Nutcracker Luncheon and Boutique is noon Thursday at the Fairlane Club in Dearborn. The event will feature a performance of excerpts from the Nutcracker ballet, an auction, and holiday shopping boutiques. Benefactor tickets at \$150 include a private reception with beauty consultations and a Nov. 17 Holiday Fashion Show at Neiman-Marcus (Donor tickets, \$60). Information: (313) 576-5154.

Have a Seat Founders' Celebration 2005 Chair Auction and Strolling Dinner commemorating Marygrove College's 100th anniversary is Thursday at the Madame Cadillac Building on the College's campus in Detroit. The event -- sponsored by Compuware Corp., Plunkett & Cooney, P.C., Butzel Long, and St. John Health -- will feature food, entertainment, and a silent and live auction. Premium Tickets, at \$125, include a pre-event reception with the artists from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., a strolling dinner, auction, membership in the Century Club and a listing in the auction program book (\$75 Patron Ticket includes strolling dinner and auction beginning at 6:30 p.m.). Reservation deadline is today. Information: (313) 927-1441 or (313) 927-1445.

Forgotten Harvest's 15th Anniversary Fundraiser is Friday at the New Detroit Science Center. The event includes food, wine, entertainment and live and silent auctions, plus a view of the new exhibit "Space: A Journey to Our Future." Tickets are \$150. Information: (248) 350-FOOD.

Henry Ford Bi-County Hospital's 13th annual Gala Toast & Roast is Saturday at The Henry Ford in Dearborn. The optional black-tie event features a full and afterglow program. The full 6:30 to 11:30 p.m. program includes Henry Ford Museum admission, a reception, dinner, and a \$200 afterglow (9 to 11:30 p.m. and includes museum admission, the chocolate fountain station, dancing and beverages for \$75). Information: (586) 759-7432 or (586) 759-7430.

The What's Coming Up calendar appears Tuesdays in the Features section. To publicize your event, send information to Alesia Cooper, The Detroit News, 615 W. Lafayette Blvd., Detroit, MI 48226. You can also call her at (313) 222-2046, fax (313) 222-2451 or e-mail acooper@detnews.com.

Chuck Bennett is a Metro Detroit freelance writer and editor of www.the-real-scoop.com, an online magazine. You can reach him at chuckbennett@hotmail.com.

Reading levels up as more students stay put

Rent incentive appears to cut parents' moves

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Monday, November 07, 2005

By Matt Bach

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FLINT - Does giving a family \$100 in monthly rent money actually lead to better student performance?

Testing data would indicate that the answer is yes. But another way to see the success of the Genesee Scholars program at Washington and Bryant elementary schools in Flint is to read a recent essay by Bryant third-grader Tazhia Prewitt - a student in Mercy Lavalais' class.

"I will be in the fourth grade next year," wrote Tazhia, 8. "Mrs. Lavalais will not be my teacher, but I know that I will be a good student because of the things that Mrs. Lavalais has taught me for two years."

Tazhia and her mother, Genevieve Ramey, are among 50 students and their families involved in a program at Bryant and Washington that is backed by the Genesee County Department of Human Services, formerly the Family Independence Agency.

The Human Services department, in cooperation with other agencies, committed more than \$120,000 over two years to the program that was designed to see if lowering the student mobility of a class would improve student achievement.

Parents of the scholar students get \$100 a month in rent money sent directly to their landlord if they kept their child in the same class and school for two years. The district, in turn, promised to keep the students with the same teacher for two years and not add new students to the classes.

The initial study of the program showed dramatic reading level gains in the Bryant class and strong gains in the Washington class, said Denise Chambers, director of Human Services.

"Last year we had some pretty good results," Chambers said. "The lack of mobility into a classroom and the students staying in the same classroom with the same teacher made a significant improvement. It also allowed the teacher to really get involved with children and make a tremendous difference."

The Bryant students in the program raised their reading levels one entire grade level by the end of the last school year while other Bryant second-graders not in the program averaged about one-third of a grade growth.

The Washington scholar students, who took a different test than the Bryant children, had an 11.5 percent gain in reading scores during the year compared to a 9 percent gain experienced by the other second-graders at Washington.

Officials are now waiting for another indicator - whether scores on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program test taken last month were impacted by the program. MEAP results aren't expected to be released to the public until early 2006.

The program also was designed to reduce the mobility in and out of the class. Both schools had around a 50 percent mobility rate in the 2003-04 school year. But there were mixed results about whether giving a family \$100 caused them to stay.

The Bryant class led by Lavalais started with 29 students, and 20 of them remain in the class this year, said Bryant Principal Grant Whitehead. The mobility rate last year was 43 percent in the scholars class compared to the average rate of 55 percent in other Bryant second-grade classes.

The Washington class, led by teacher Theresa VanSteenburg, started with 25 students, and 21 remain in the class most of the day. The class had a 12 percent mobility rate last year compared to a 73 percent mobility rate in the other Washington second-grade classes.

Two of the students in VanSteenburg's class are now receiving special education services and are technically assigned to a different classroom, but they also spend time in VanSteenburg's class, said Washington Principal Maria Hope.

"The \$100 is huge because it's hard making a living in this area," VanSteenburg said.

Most of the students who did not stay with the program moved out of the Flint area. In one case at Washington, a student moved after her mother died.

"Different things come up, and in some factors, \$100 a month is not necessarily going to take care of it," Hope said.

Ramey, Tazhia's mother, said the \$100 definitely helped her get by as a single mother with four children. Bryant was Tazhia's third school in five years, including preschool.

"I would've stayed here anyway, but it helped out very much," said Ramey, who works third shift as a nursing assistant. "It's been a big help and a big incentive."

Ramey also liked how parents in the program are expected to be involved in the school by attending regular parent meetings and teacher conferences.

There also are Human Services department workers based at Washington and Bryant to help the families with various needs, including supplying appropriate reading-level books, shoes and student uniforms. The help was extended to the entire school, including students at Durant-Tuuri-Mott Elementary, and not just the scholar students.

The Human Services workers also assist Lavalais and VanSteenburg by calling parents if a student is absent. Both teachers said the daily attendance of their students was much better than the attendance of previous classes they taught.

Chambers said the success of the program depended heavily on the quality of the teachers involved. Chambers is hoping to expand the program and has shared the data gathered with other agencies around the state.

Chambers also will present the findings to the students and families in the scholars program during a dinner later this month.

For the Elderly, a Place to Turn to When Abuse Comes From Home

By JOHN LELAND
The New York Times

Published: November 8, 2005

They raised children and grandchildren. They outlived their husbands, surviving the hardships of both youth and old age. But when they needed protection from the relatives they had cared for and loved, they found themselves in a social service system intended for younger women or children.

The women, who spoke on the condition that their full names not be used out of concern for their privacy and to avoid further conflict, are now safe in one of the nation's first shelter programs for abused elders, started this year at the Hebrew Home for the Aged in Riverdale, the Bronx. One gave only her first name, Frances; the other agreed to be identified by her last initial, as Mrs. B. Frances, 86, said she went to the police after her son-in-law hit her and pushed her around. She landed in a shelter for battered women equipped for much younger women, where for a month she sat in a chair during the day and slept in a church with the other shelter residents at night. Mrs. B., 79, spent two months in homeless shelters with her 19-year-old grandson, who she said became violent toward her when he was on drugs. "He'd throw anything in his hand, but I endured it because he was my grandson," she said.

When she finally went to the police after being locked out of a shelter for families because of his erratic behavior, she was directed to a domestic violence officer whom she could not reach.

By these different routes, Frances and Mrs. B. became two of the first residents of the Hebrew Home's new program for abused elders, one of about eight such programs in the country, according to the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life, an advocacy group.

"It's 100 percent better here" than in the battered women's shelter, Frances said. She gestured to a social worker who had worked with her since she came to the program in January. "God bless the child that sent me here," she said. "I lost one daughter and gained one."

In 1981, when Congress first addressed elder abuse as a pervasive national problem, a House committee on aging called for the creation of emergency shelters for older victims, providing the services and medical care needed by older men and women.

Since then, reports of elder abuse have multiplied, reaching 472,813 in 2000, the latest number available, according to the National Center on Elder Abuse, a research group financed by the United States Administration on Aging. This number is probably low because not all abuse is reported.

But for the most part, those shelters have not materialized. "It's a huge need, and it's not being met," said Joanne Otto, executive director of the National Adult Protective Services Association, a nonprofit group that provides training and advocacy around elder abuse. Domestic violence shelters, she said, are often ill suited to the "continuum of needs" of elder victims, including geriatric care, physical therapy and peer counseling.

Ms. Otto cited a lack of federal funds and legislation, including the Elder Justice Act, which has been introduced several times but not passed.

"There's a reluctance to acknowledge the enormity of the problem of elder abuse," she said. In terms of police protection and services, and even accurate figures on the prevalence of elder abuse, she said, "it's like where domestic violence was 20 years ago."

On a September afternoon, Frances sat with a social worker named Emily Brooks at the Hebrew Home's Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Center for Elder Abuse Prevention, a free program started in January to provide temporary emergency shelter for up to 31 abused elders.

The home raised \$1.1 million for the program, which houses victims among the general population. Frances's neighbors do not know her circumstances. If they ask whether her daughter will visit, she said: "I tell them, 'no, we're distant.' I don't have to go into detail."

For Frances, the trouble began last year, when she had a heart attack and a triple-bypass operation. She lived in Oregon then, and her daughter, who lived in New York, persuaded Frances to move back with her.

Though mother and daughter had gotten along in the past, they were soon in conflict, said Ms. Brooks, the social worker. Frances liked to be independent - to cook for herself, to walk around the neighborhood. Her daughter felt she was becoming forgetful and unsafe. But mainly they fell out over money. According to Frances, her daughter began demanding \$300 a month for rent, which they had never discussed before. Frances refused.

Finally, just after Christmas last year, her daughter "sent her husband to hit me because she wanted my money," Frances said. "She told him, 'hit her hard.' " Frances left the apartment in search of a police officer.

"Since that day, I have no use for my daughter," she said. "Even on the day I pass on, I don't want her to know."

Before opening a shelter program for abused elders, the nursing home studied battered women's shelters. But the cultures of nursing homes and shelters are different, said Daniel A. Reingold, president of the home.

"As a nursing home, everything we do is geared toward involving the family in care," he said.

"Now we open a shelter, and for those residents we prevent family contact. Our care for some residents is diametrically opposed to everything we stress with our staff."

Legally, this policy puts the home in uncharted territory, he said, because some of the relatives banned from the home may not be abusers.

This can be especially complicated with patients suffering from dementia, who may not recognize abuse or be able to ask for help, said Sara Aravanis, director of the National Center on Elder Abuse.

Frances, who said her mind was clear, said her daughter told people she had Alzheimer's disease so that if she complained, no one would believe her.

As a result, Frances said: "I had nobody to talk to. I didn't want to involve my grandson, because that's his mother and father I'm talking about. And he's going to believe them, not me, because I'm much older, and his father and mother tell him that I make up stories."

For Mrs. B., who had been in the Hebrew Home for a week when she was interviewed, the days there hung heavy with guilt and worry for her grandson, whom she had raised and - to her mind - failed. In his drug rages, he had cursed her and thrown things at her, making her fear for her life. But it was worse not knowing where he was, she said.

"Even with all he's done, I'm sick over it," she said. "I don't know if he's in jail, if he's O.K. There must be something else I could have done, but I don't know what."

Like most abuse victims, Mrs. B. wants to return to the community, even if it means putting herself at risk. The program is meant to provide temporary shelter, Mr. Reingold said, though some residents, including Frances, may stay.

Joy Solomon, the center's legal director, who previously worked as a prosecutor on cases involving child abuse and domestic violence, said it was common for abused elders, especially women, to want to return to the children who had hurt them.

"They feel shame that it's their own child, and feel responsible for the child's behavior," Ms. Solomon said. "They want to be mothers. We have no choice but to accept their decision."

For these elders, she said, even more than for younger women who are abused by their partners, there is often no question of starting a new home independent of their abusers. "Home is home," Ms. Solomon said. "It's comfortable, and they know their surroundings. They want to be with the people they love, even if those people are hurting them."

For Mrs. B., social workers at the home were trying to find a subsidized apartment. "It's very nice here - they do everything for you, but I've always had my own apartment, that's what I want," Mrs. B. said. "My time is running out. I can't drift forever. This is my fifth year with breast cancer. This was supposed to be it."

Her worst injury, she said, was the knowledge "that I have helped my family, and when it came time for them to help me, they weren't there for me; I'm my only family."

Before coming to the shelter, she went to her church to leave a message for her grandson, trying to make contact with him. The minister's wife had told her, " 'You've done all you can for him; do something for yourself,' " she said.

But still, she worried. Even if he finds her and hits her again, she said, she will not report him to the police. He is, after all, her own flesh and blood. And it was not her grandson that was bad, it was the drugs, she said, adding, "I've taken so much from him, one more thing can't hurt."

Senior centers forced to cut

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

DEAN BOHN

THE SAGINAW NEWS

Ruben Daniels would "turn over in his grave" if he knew about the senior center closing at the First Ward Community Center, says 86-year-old Jessie Daily of Saginaw.

Saginaw County Commission on Aging officials are closing two senior centers -- First Ward in Saginaw, and one in St. Charles -- and will reduce the days the Frankenmuth site remains open. Officials also will lay off two staff members.

"Expenditures have risen and revenue has depleted," said Karen M. Courneya, director of the commission.

The last day for the First Ward and St. Charles centers is Friday, Dec. 30. Reduction of days in Frankenmuth will take place in January or February, Courneya said.

There are 16 senior centers throughout Saginaw County. Centers offer nutritional, social, recreational and educational support for seniors age 60 and older.

Daily, who was on the Commission on Aging's Advisory Board in the late 1970s, lives about a mile from the First Ward Community Center. He visits the senior center every day for his meals and said its pending closure upsets him.

Daniels and the First Ward center are linked because it's one of the places where the beloved Saginaw civic leader and race-relations pioneer made his mark. Daniels was director of First Ward, and he served as a champion of youth and education until his death in 1993.

"This was Ruben Daniels' first site," said Daily, who worked at the center 37 years as a building supervisor.

"I feel horrible. I don't really know if I'll go to another center. I doubt it."

His friend, Barnes "Barney" L. Hall, who turns 79 on Dec. 28 -- two days before the closure -- said he understands why the center must shut.

"I feel bad about it, but they bring meals for 15 to 20 people, and you only get three or five people there," Hall said. "They just throw the rest of the food away."

"I've been a part of the First Ward Community Center ever since the first director, Edith Baillie, started it in 1936. I was 10 years old when she registered me. Sometimes it was the only food to be had back then. Times were hard."

"But you got to have people to participate. Ours just wasn't clicking for some reason or another."

The same is true in St. Charles, said Michael P. O'Hare, District 1 County Board of Commissioners member who represents St. Charles.

"(The St. Charles Senior Center) wasn't used very much," O'Hare said.

"It was a lack of participation that killed it. They'd get only three to five people showing up."

But it was lack of money that made commission officials look for targets.

"We were short of funds," Courneya said of the Commission on Aging, which has a budget of about \$3.6 million.

"We lost millage funds, Medicaid dollars have been reduced, salaries and fringes have increased and grants have been reduced."

An Older Americans Grant that provided \$35,000 for senior center staffing is gone, she said.

"We lost a \$25,000 grant for the Kinship Care Program (from the state Department of Human Services) and about \$6,000 in a Care Management Grant from the state of Michigan," Courneya said.

The closure of the First Ward site will save about \$8,000, shutting down the St. Charles facility about \$12,000, and the hours cut at Frankenmuth approximately \$12,000, Courneya said.

The reduction of two staff member will save about \$55,000, she said.

There was not a meal program in St. Charles, by their choice," Courneya said. "It was the only senior center without one. Instead, they mostly played cards."

She is not sure which days will drop from the Frankenmuth center's calendar.

Courneya said there are other sites near the centers that will close where seniors can go.

"The Marie Davis Center is about a mile away from the First Ward Center," Courneya said. "In St. Charles, they can go to Chesaning or Hemlock."

Two other senior centers closed in 2001 -- the one in Taymouth Township in the summer and the one in Shields in the fall.

A September arson fire damaged another senior gathering spot, Audra Francis Friendship Center at 2717 Webber in Saginaw. It has yet to reopen. The Marie Davis Center also is close to the Audra Francis site. v

Dean Bohn is a staff writer for The Saginaw News. You may reach him at 776-9679.

UDOW PLANNING PILOTS OF WELFARE CHANGES

As of March 1, some of the state's cash assistance recipients could move from Work First to JET. Under Jobs, Education and Training, recipients would be eligible for additional assistance and could count more education time toward work requirements, but also would have more opportunities to face sanctions.

Human Services Director Marianne Udow unveiled the proposal to legislators in a closed-door work group meeting last week in hopes of having the program incorporated into coming legislative welfare reforms.

Under JET, DHS, Department of Labor and Economic Growth and Michigan Works Agency staff would work with each family to determine what obstacles the adults have in finding employment and develop a plan to overcome those obstacles.

Ms. Udow noted in her presentation that about half of current welfare recipients are illiterate, yet current rules do not allow them to cut back on work time to take the classes they would need to become literate as well as the job training needed to increase their incomes.

She said current rules also do not easily accommodate the mental illness or substance abuse that many recipients face.

Under the pilot, caseworkers would assess the family for mental health needs as well as for family services such as child neglect and domestic violence. Appropriate family members would be referred to providers to address those issues.

Those expected to find work would also be assessed for employment and job training needs and would be referred to appropriate classes. The program would also help the family cover such needs as transportation and appropriate work attire.

Families also would be offered programs in money management and other life skills to help them prepare to move from state assistance.

Given the expended levels of programs offered under the pilots, Ms. Udow recommended that families face sanctions for failure to participate in any of the programs. Current law provides for loss of one month's benefits for refusing to participate in work placement programs or for refusing the work those programs find.

Sanctions could be waived if the required activity, be it work or some other program, would push the adult beyond 40 hours of participation or child care was not available. The sanctions also could be waived if the recipient showed his or her employer was requiring excessively hazardous work or was violating employment laws or if the nearest work or program was more than two hours away.

Though the mechanics of the pilots can be undertaken under PA 147, 2005, Ms. Udow said that legislation might not include enough money to cover all of the costs of the pilots. The current plan is for four pilot sites that would cover 5,600 families.

Goals for the program, by September 30, 2007, are to close 34 percent of open cases, keep 75 percent of those cases closed out of the system during the pilot (current statistics show half would return in that time), and increase wages by 20 percent for at least half of those with employment.

By 2008, the goal is to have 20 percent of those who participated in the pilot with wages above 150 percent of poverty.

Area groups: Hurricane victims still need help

By Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

With the devastation of hurricanes Katrina and Rita perhaps fading from people's memories, two local radio stations along with several community groups are launching a "Let's Not Forget" campaign.

They plan to provide assistance, for six months to a year, to four evacuee families who have relocated to the Lansing area.

During the next five weeks, WQHH (96.5 FM) and WXLA (1180 AM) will ask for everything from monetary donations to clothing to transportation.

WQHH program director Brant Johnson, who is spearheading the effort, said most assistance until now has focused on immediate needs.

"We wanted to have a vision of helping people for the long-term," he said. "The bottom line is: There is nothing for these people to go back to - nothing."

State Rep. Michael Murphy, D-Lansing, applauded the efforts of those who continue to help people whose lives were devastated by the hurricanes.

Murphy, chairman of the Michigan Legislative Black Caucus, is part of a national task force for hurricane relief. "There's still a need down there," he said.

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or kgrasha@lsj.com.
Hurricane help

Organizations involved in the "Let's Not Forget" campaign for victims of this year's Gulf Coast hurricanes include:

- WQHH/WXLA radio; St. Stephen's Community Church; Dean Transportation; Pentecostal Outreach Church of God in Christ; Black Child and Family Institute; Boys & Girls Club of Lansing; Metro Music; Brick Citi; Making a Difference; The New Citizens Press

Donations, including clothing, household items and personal hygiene items can be sent to:

- WQHH/WXLA, 1011 Northcrest Rd., Suite 4, Lansing, MI 48906

The Detroit News

Letters

November 8, 2005

No privacy at public trough

Although I agree with most of Nolan Finley's column ("Oops' babies are breaking state budget," Oct. 23), he couldn't be more wrong on one important point. He said "Demanding contraception use as a condition of receiving aid is an idea with appeal, but one that fails the tests of privacy and religious freedom" -- what nonsense.

When people hire (vote for) the government to forcibly extract money from me to take it for themselves, it's my privacy that's been invaded, not theirs.

S.G. Applebee

Gaines, Mich.

Students told how to spot domestic violence

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

By Morgan Jarema
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- With more than 50 years of combined experience cutting, perming and coloring hair, Nancy Klooster and Lisa Atchison know that being a stylist is about more than that.

It's about building relationships.

Klooster and Atchison, who work next to each other at Classic Hair in Plainfield Township, have listened to their clients talk about births, deaths, marriages and divorces.

And sometimes, women have talked to them about -- or they have suspected -- domestic abuse.

"It's very natural to get a confidence going," Klooster said. "We sometimes learn things about them that they don't tell other people, and sometimes they learn things about us that we don't tell other people, either."

There was no class to help future stylists learn about domestic violence when Klooster and Atchison were in cosmetology school.

But some of today's local cosmetology students are being armed with information.

Nancy Twiehaus, a family advocate at the YWCA's Domestic Crisis Center, spoke to nearly 100 students and staffers Monday at Chic University of Cosmetology.

Twiehaus told the students that they might come face to scalp with the issue -- in men, women and children: whether they notice bruises, missing clumps of hair, anxiousness from clients or a too-attentive partner. Those are signs that something may be wrong.

She passed out a list of local resources.

"Be supportive," she said. "Tell her you believe her, that what she tells you is confidential and that there are places she can go for help."

Simply listening can be the best way to help, Twiehaus said.

"For battered women, trust is a big, big issue," she said. "It's going to take time, if ever, to get to the point where a client will open up to you."

Twenty-two year-old Chic student Sharon Ciminski thinks Monday's talk will help in her future career.

"I think it will be a touchy thing to bring up if it ever happens," she said, "but I know who to get ahold of now."

The Chic students also donated more than \$4,000 to the YWCA's Domestic Crisis Shelter pantry, which they raised through fund-raisers.

Life terms for juveniles deserving of dialogue

Lawmakers should measure success so far

Tuesday, November 8, 2005
Editorial Ann Arbor News

Rising violence among young people together with laws allowing children to be charged as adults have Michigan sporting this dubious distinction: It's now second among all states in sentencing juveniles to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

The distinction is dubious because for many, dispensing such tough punishment is necessary to send the message that particularly heinous acts - no matter the age of their perpetrator - won't be tolerated. But for many others, including state Sen. Liz Brater of Ann Arbor, such punishment-without-distinction doesn't acknowledge that some offenders eventually could become productive members of society if only given the chance.

Brater, a Democrat, has introduced legislation that would prohibit Michigan juveniles from being sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole and give those already serving life terms a chance to get out. The juveniles "deserve second looks," she says. Republican lawmakers who control the GOP-led Legislature think otherwise. They don't believe changes are warranted for a system that now has 168 17-year-olds and 141 14-to-16-year-olds serving life sentences without the possibility of parole. "Public safety has to trump everything," says Sen. Alan Cropsey of DeWitt, the Senate Judiciary Committee chairman.

State lawmakers propose bills to lower health care costs

Web-posted Nov 6, 2005

By SVEN GUSTAFSON
Of The Oakland Press

Two Republican state lawmakers are touting legislation they say would help lower the costs of health care for individuals and businesses.

While the two packages, introduced in recent weeks, are unrelated, they could come as welcome relief to a state staggering under the economic burden of spiraling health care costs.

The most recent announcement came last week from Saginaw Township Republican Rep. Roger Kahn, a cardiologist.

He announced a three-bill package designed to lower the cost of prescription drugs by requiring pharmaceutical companies to disclose their physician-directed marketing practices, requiring pharmacies to publicly post drug prices according to class or the most frequently prescribed, and holding pharmacy benefit managers accountable for passing on savings they work for to consumers.

Kahn said the bills are about helping to lower the price of prescription drugs but added, "There's also the notion of restoring confidence on the part of purchasers, whether that is a company that purchases drugs or patients who are prescribed drugs. ... These bills are largely about sunshine and confidence."

Kahn said most of the marketing of products by drug companies is "above board," but that he once declined an offer of a two-week, all-expenses-paid trip to Switzerland to see a plant where pacemakers were produced.

He said forcing pharmaceutical companies to reveal marketing techniques and costs would ensure that doctors prescribe medicines for the right reasons. He said that would also help lower the amount of money companies spend on advertising by requiring those companies to divulge how much they spend on marketing.

"That information ought to be available," he said.

Another bill to post drug prices at pharmacies would allow consumers to shop for the best prices on prescription drugs, he said, adding, "This is not something that there's much of in medicine."

It would complement another bill authored by Kahn that would create a Web site through the state Attorney General's office listing prices of prescription drugs throughout the state. That bill has already passed the House and is pending in a Senate committee.

Recent polling data from Lansing-based EPIC/MRA showed that 89 percent of respondents believe making prescription drugs more affordable should be either a top or important priority.

The poll, which sampled 600 and had a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points, also showed wide support for the concepts of Kahn's bills.

The Michigan branch of AARP has signed on to support the bills as part of the organization's national effort to reduce prescription drug prices, said Bill Knox, a spokesman for the state group.

"It throws the light of day on transactions and prescription drug manufacturers and salespeople," he said.

In the state Senate, meanwhile, Sen. Tom George, a Kalamazoo County Republican and licensed anesthesiologist, has come up with a plan that would require health insurers, HMOs and nonprofit health care corporations to offer wellness coverage and provide rebates in premiums for participation. Health insurance providers, unlike life, home and auto insurance companies, cannot offer incentives for behaviors that reflect low risk.

"There's a lot of companies that are doing this, that are innovative," George said. "A lot of them are in Michigan, but if you look at it, a lot of them are big companies that self-insure."

George said those selfinsuring companies, which hire health insurance providers to administer and pay claims but buy insurance on their own, can realize benefits if their employees remain healthy.

"Here's the problem: If you're a small company and you only have 12 employees, you're too small to self-insure. So they're buying insurance" from providers, which rate premiums by pooling employees based upon factors such as age and area of the state. "If you're healthy, you're basically going to be subsidizing everybody else."

"My bills change that. They allow carriers that sell to small employers in small group markets, they require them to design a rebate for healthy behavior."

George said examples of healthy behavior would be exercise, refraining from smoking and maintaining a proper diet.

According to a 2004 report by Ann Arbor-based Altarum, which compared Michigan with 17 benchmark states, Michigan ranked No. 1 among the states for coronary heart disease-related deaths and No. 2 for rates of obesity and diabetes. The report said overweight and obese residents incur up to \$1,500 more in annual premiums for health insurance.

"Per capita expenditures on drugs and other medical nondurables is almost 14 percent higher in Michigan than the benchmark states, and the number of retail prescriptions per capita in Michigan is 19 percent above the benchmark states," the report said. The report went on to recommend that Michigan expand its promotion of following healthful lifestyles and preventing diseases.

George said estimates show that unhealthful behaviors account for 25 percent to 30 percent of health care costs nationwide.

"We're not looking at the underlying causes," he said. "And this gives someone a pocketbook incentive" to change behaviors.

MIRS

November 7, 2005

Cox Announces \$1.2 Million Medicaid Settlement

A Tennessee-based generic drug manufacturer agreed to pay more than \$1.2 million into Michigan's Medicaid Program as part of a multi-state settlement reached with 49 states and the federal government, Attorney General Mike **COX** announced today.

As part of a civil agreement, King Pharmaceuticals will pay \$124 million to state and federal coffers for incorrectly reporting drug prices to the federal government from 1994-2002, and, as a result, underpaying Medicaid and other state programs millions of dollars.

"Michigan's most vulnerable citizens rely on Medicaid to provide them with vital health care services and every dollar must be carefully protected," said Cox.

King Pharmaceuticals was caught skimming on the rebates due to state Medicaid programs to the tune of \$62 million. The settlement doubles the amount.

Michigan's total share of the settlement is \$1,244,841. Of that amount, \$556,000 will be paid directly to the state with the balance going to the federal government to reimburse its share of the Medicaid costs.

The civil settlements with King Pharmaceuticals further requires the company to enter into a Corporate Integrity Agreement with the Office of the Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in order to monitor the company's operations and ensure compliance with the law in the future.

MIRS

November 7, 2005

Gov: D.C. Proposal Puts Medicaid At Risk

Michigan would lose around \$280 million in federal Medicaid money starting in 2010 under a Congressional Medicaid proposal scheduled for U.S. House action Tuesday, according to the Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM** administration.

Granholm is asking the state's Congressional delegation in a strongly worded letter to reject a Republican proposal to eliminate a state's ability to collect a legal tax on managed care facilities, which Michigan and a handful of other states are charging to keep their Medicaid program afloat.

"This would be devastating for our fragile health system," said T.J. **BUCHOLZ**, spokesman for the Department of Community Health (DCH). "Congress is trying to fund another tax cut on the backs of the state's most vulnerable population. It's Robin Hood in reverse."

The U.S. Senate's proposed changes to the country's Medicaid system apparently do not include the elimination of the tax, Bucholz said.

November 8, 2005

Group hopes to put homelessness on people's minds

By KURT HAUGLIE, Mining Gazette Writer

HOUGHTON -When the weather turns cold, the issue of homelessness becomes even more acute, and the people who work for the agencies and organizations addressing the issue become even more concerned.

To bring attention to the homeless issue, Gov. Jennifer Granholm has declared Nov. 13-19 as Homeless Awareness Week in Michigan with the theme of "We End it Here, We End it Now." Clare Kolehmainen, case manager for the Continuum of Care for Baraga, Houghton and Keweenaw counties, said one of the main concerns at this time of year for local social service agencies and organizations is making certain that people at risk know there is help available to pay heating costs.

Some low income people who decide to pay their heating bills run the risk of not having enough money to pay rent, which means they could lose their homes, Kolehmainen said. Other people may decide not to pay their heating bills and risk shutoff, which would have the effect of homelessness as far as protection from cold is concerned. Parents run the risk of having their children removed from the home by the state in such a situation also, she added.

Local organizations, such as the St. Vincent De Paul Society, offer monetary assistance for heating costs, but some recipients use their allotment up quickly.

"People are going to be tapped out," she said. "They don't have money for utilities now."

The Michigan Department of Human Services does offer assistance for utilities payments, Kolehmainen said, but not everyone who applies is eligible. In order to get assistance from other agencies, people must first have a denial letter from DHS.

Often, people who have received a utility shutoff notice seek help the day the shutoff is due to take place, and Kolehmainen said that's too late.

"People need to come in when they first get (the shutoff notice)," she said.

Although Kolehmainen doesn't work with individual clients, she is the Continuum of Care contact person for the various agencies and organizations providing assistance, so she is aware of the degree of the homeless problem in the Copper Country.

Knowing exactly how many people are homeless at a particular time is difficult, however, she said, because many people don't consider themselves homeless so they don't report themselves as such. They move from home to home of relatives and friends, but they don't have their own homes. There are shelters for victims of domestic abuse, but there is no homeless shelter in the Copper Country which could give a count of residents.

Meeting designed to help poor pay winter heating bills

*Tuesday, November 08, 2005
Citizen Patriot staff report*

A coalition of Jackson-area human-service groups and the faith-based community are meeting Thursday to discuss how to assist low-income people pay high energy costs predicted for this winter.

The meeting will be at noon in the First Presbyterian Church, 743 W. Michigan Ave. Representatives from Consumers Energy will also be at the meeting.

"We know we have to bring the community together to help care for those who can't afford to stay warm this winter," said Ruben Marquez, board secretary for the United Way of Jackson County and president of the UAW Local No. 1966, Eaton Aerospace.

Jackson County's 211 program, an informational and referral service for those in need, received more than 2,000 requests for utility-bill assistance last year. Those calls are expected to increase significantly this year.

"We're trying to work together to make the best use of our strengths and resources so that we can all make a difference in these winter months and beyond," said Jim Watson, pastor of Christ Lutheran Church.

All area faith-based groups are encouraged to attend. For more information, call Bethany Timmons at the United Way of Jackson County at 796-5123

The Detroit News

Saturday, November 5, 2005

Wal-Mart sponsors economic conference, but is it risky?

By Anne D'innocenzio / AP Business Writer

NEW YORK -- Under a barrage of criticism that Wal-Mart Stores Inc. is bad for the overall economy, the world's largest company is taking a public look at itself.

In an unusual move, Wal-Mart is sponsoring a gathering of noted economists who will debate the company's impact on the economy and individual communities. The session, to be held Friday in Washington, is Wal-Mart's latest step in a campaign to appear more open and repair its reputation among investors, politicians, employees and consumers.

Wal-Mart has built a \$285 billion machine on a low-cost model whose prices have given it a competitive edge over its rivals. Now, even as the discounter prepares for the holiday season with a public pledge to be even more aggressive on prices, it faces a dilemma on how to continue its momentum while also appeasing its critics. Negative publicity has already hurt its stock price and a tough economy has slowed its sales growth.

But holding an economic conference, to be attended by about 80 people from the press and academia, is a risky strategy. Some unflattering assessments of Wal-Mart are expected to be presented, according to papers obtained by The Associated Press. Even some supporters who were presenting upbeat studies raised doubts about the retailer's business model.

"Wal-Mart has brought lower prices to people, but some of Wal-Mart's labor practices are questionable," said Jerry Hausman, economics professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His study found that Wal-Mart's entry into the food business has forced supermarkets to lower their prices by 5 percent more than they had planned, straining their profitability.

Wal-Mart's critics have argued that the retailer's low-cost model comes at the expense of the economy; its pay and benefits drive down those at other companies trying to compete. The retailer's low benefits have also forced employees to rely on Medicaid as a safety net, squeezing state coffers, they say. Opponents also believe that Wal-Mart destroys communities and creates retail sprawl.

The retailer has long argued that its low prices raise the standard of living for consumers, particularly low-income shoppers, and help control inflation.

"This is a first step in engaging in a dialogue that will be important to this company and to this country," said Nate Hurst, a Wal-Mart spokesman, though he acknowledged that holding the conference carries some risks because of the possibility of negative comments about the company. "There is a lot of information out there, and we want to try to get it all in the room and talk on a pretty high level about what the U.S. looks like with Wal-Mart in it."

The company hired Global Insight Inc., a forecasting company in Waltham, Mass., to conduct a year-long economic analysis, giving economists unfettered access to internal wage and benefits data. But the conference will also include presentations from other economists. How those

studies will jive with the Global Insight findings, to be released at the conference, remain to be seen.

Wal-Mart's opponents believe the company's efforts are better spent elsewhere.

"We don't need additional studies to show us what we already know," said Chris Kofinis, a spokesman at the union-backed Wake Up Wal-Mart, one of the most vocal Wal-Mart critics.

"Instead of supporting conferences, it should focus on its core problems and failures that it knows already exists."

Tracy Sefl, a spokeswoman at Wal-Mart Watch, another anti-Wal-Mart organization, said her group will be sponsoring its own economic conference.

Wal-Mart is holding the gathering as its most vocal critics are increasingly turning the retailer's human resources policies into a political issue. Already, there's legislation that would require states to disclose annually the number of employees of large companies who receive government funded health care. The bill is directly aimed at making Wal-Mart more generous.

Wal-Mart is growing more worried that the bad publicity is keeping some shoppers away from their stores, according to an internal memo made public by Wal-Mart Watch on Monday.

The August 2004 memo, drawn up by consulting firm McKinsey & Co., reported that 2 percent to 8 percent of 1,800 shoppers polled had stopped shopping at the retailer because of the negative press.

What could make things worse is Robert Greenwald's scathing documentary called "Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Prices," which will have a limited theatrical release on Nov. 4 in New York and Los Angeles and then go to a week of screenings at 7,000 locations including churches, homes and libraries across the country organized by Wal-Mart critics. Organizers hope to use the movie as a tool to accelerate the movement against Wal-Mart.

Amid the heightened criticism, Wal-Mart has stepped up its public relations campaign, but the the conference confounds its critics, some of whom wonder why Wal-Mart would want to make itself more vulnerable. Some like Sefl question the validity of the Global Insight study.

Jim Dorsey, Global Insight's spokesman, stated that the study is independent, and is being overseen by an advisory committee including representatives from the liberal Brookings Institution and conservative American Enterprise Institute. All papers will be available for the public and posted on Global Insight's Web site on Friday.

Economists expect a lively debate.

Michael J. Hicks, an economist at the Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, in Dayton Ohio, finds that Wal-Mart does increase Medicaid costs by roughly \$898 per worker across the United States, although he said he hasn't compared those numbers with those at Wal-Mart competitors.

David Neumark, a senior fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California will be offering evidence of Wal-Mart's negative impact on overall income in the areas where its stores are located. He said he would like to know how poor and non-poor families are specifically affected by having a Wal-Mart nearby.

He added, "People are ignoring what the economy would look like without a Wal-Mart in it."

On the Net:

www.globalinsight.com

www.wakeupwalmart.com

www.walmart.com

www.walmartwatch.com



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING



MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

News Release

Contact: Stepheni Schlinker or Maureen Sorbet (517) 373-7394

State improvement in Food Assistance Program results in approval to turn fine into investment, saving taxpayers \$6 million

November 8, 2005

LANSING – Michigan's continuing improvement in administering the federal Food Stamp Program – called Food Assistance in Michigan – has resulted in the state obtaining federal approval to reinvest more than \$6 million that could have been a fine paid from state funds.

The U.S. Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) evaluates states' performance administering the federal Food Stamp Program. Michigan improved its performance in administering the program in 2004 and the state requested permission to reinvest rather than pay the "at risk" amount for past performance.

The FNS approved Michigan's request Oct. 19, allowing the Department of Human Services to continue investing the \$6 million in improvements that have been successful in reducing calculation errors from as high as 17.7 percent in 1998. The program is now 92 percent accurate.

"These initiatives include developing our Technical Assistance Team, training and conferences for our staff and technology enhancements," Udow said. "Together, these are the tools we have used to bring our program back into the national norm in terms of program errors.

"Because of this action, here is more than \$6 million that Michigan taxpayers will not have to return to Washington."

Michigan's Food Assistance Program is funded by federal funds and state-administered through the Department of Human Services. When we are assessed a penalty, the payment comes out of the state's general fund money. In September there were 491,274 households and more than 1 million residents receiving Food Assistance benefits in Michigan.

For more information go to www.michigan.gov/dhs

Published November 8, 2005
[From the Lansing State Journal]

Melot: Capitol crowd does its doing State lawmakers make sure to look like they're on ball

Gov. Jennifer Granholm and legislative leaders are on the brink of success in their economy policy.

Not that the mammoth deal on tax cuts and business incentives they struck last week is a cure-all for the economy. It might not even be an aspirin.

That wasn't really the goal, now, was it? The real goal for the State Capitol crowd was to show residents (read voters) that they were "doing something."

And something they've done.

Like all political compromises, this deal is marked by a lack of coherence. It tries to do everything at once and will probably end up doing very little for Michigan.

Ask yourself, what does Michigan do well? What can Michigan build on for the future?

One look at this plan and the Capitol's clear answer is "protect the status quo." But hey, that's OK, the status quo keeps the current politicians in power.

The status quo, alas, also keeps Michigan wedded to big-time, old-line manufacturing. Is that the healthiest way to go, to bet on the current management at places like General Motors Corp. and Delphi?

Perhaps Granholm & Co. should have been on Capitol Hill a few weeks ago, when a tax analyst made this little point in congressional testimony:

"(S)mall businesses represent 99 percent of all employers and generate three-quarters of all net new jobs."

Michigan has plenty of small businesses. And this new econ package does offer them some tax help. But in light of that fact, should Michigan be focusing aid on foundering big firms?

The Granholm camp, of course, will point to their long-desired goal of using state funds to aid business start-ups. Such new guys will be small by nature.

Ask yourself, again: What does the state of Michigan do best?

Well, the state has a decent record in paying for health care and education. What's its record on picking which business plans will prosper and thereby deserve public aid?

Put another way: Serious criticism has been leveled at Michigan's principal business selection effort - MEDC - for spending lots of money to garner few jobs. No serious person is saying Medicaid or state universities have failed in their fundamental duty.

There's a lesson in that.

Yet, Granholm and the Legislature will make it more difficult for the state to handle its health and education tasks. And all just to gamble your money on the jobs market.

Granholm's plan is to try to pick "winners and losers," like a losing gambler choosing colors at the roulette wheel.

The Republicans, to varying degrees, would hamstring the state's legitimate investments - health care and education - just to hand more favors to big business.

To be fair, this isn't just politics. Even if Granholm wanted to launch major investments in health care and education, the public's shown no desire to give her the money.

Republicans could have made the case for zero business taxes, on anyone. But the public's not going to sign off on the cuts in state services that would require, either.

Bound by these political realities, Michigan will now get tax cuts and giveaways that are unlikely to redesign the Michigan economy, but will make it harder for the state to perform its legitimate tasks.

But, hey, they did something.

What do you think? Write Derek Melot, Lansing State Journal, 120 E. Lenawee St., Lansing, MI 48919. For past columns, visit www.lsj.com/columnists.
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GOP Budget Cuts Face Varied Opposition

By Jonathan Weisman Washington Post Staff Writer

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A full-court press by liberal activists, coupled with conflicting regional interests, is threatening to sink a far-reaching Republican budget bill in the House that was designed to slice \$54 billion in federal spending over the next five years.

House GOP leaders said yesterday that they will push for a vote on the measure Thursday, and that they are prepared to do what it takes to put them over the top. That may mean temporarily ditching a provision opening Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling or throwing aside an offshore oil drilling provision to win balking Florida Republicans.

But for now, Republicans concede they are well short of the votes needed to pass a bill that would require longer work hours to qualify for welfare, allow states to impose new costs on Medicaid beneficiaries, cut assistance for child support enforcement, trim student loan spending, cut back agriculture supports, and curb eligibility for food stamps.

The Senate last week narrowly approved legislation that would trim about \$35 billion from the budget over five years, but that bill largely avoided the direct cuts to beneficiaries of federal anti-poverty programs contained in the House budget measure. Those proposed cuts have created strong misgivings among some Republican moderates, especially since a five-year, \$70 billion tax cut is awaiting action that would more than offset the savings in the budget cuts.

Complicating the problem for GOP leaders are a few narrow provisions in the House bill, such as lifting the moratorium on offshore oil drilling, that have elicited protests from rank-and-file Republicans who are usually in the leadership's camp. Rep. Mark Green (R-Wis.), a leadership ally who is running for governor of his dairy state, wants the House bill to match the Senate's extension of the federal milk support program.

"They are a long way away from getting the votes," said Rep. Ray LaHood (R-Ill.). "Medicaid, Medicare, food stamps, whatever -- for every person, there's an issue."

Such misgivings are being exploited by liberal activists, who have organized protests in House members' home districts, phone campaigns and e-mail blitzes. The same umbrella organization of liberal groups and trade unions that helped stymie President Bush's Social Security proposals has turned its attention to the budget plan.

"It's a different group every week, coming in here, making calls," said John Gentzel, communications director for Rep. Jim Gerlach (R-Pa.), whose suburban Philadelphia district has been "saturated" with budget protests. "It's just one group after another."

House Democrats have compiled lists of committee votes for cuts to agriculture, student aid, child support and health care programs, as well as for oil drilling in the Alaska refuge, that Democratic leaders vow to use in next year's midterm congressional elections.

"This is going to test whether moderate Republicans are really moderate," said Rep. Rahm Emanuel (Ill.), chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. "There are a ton of people who will have a day of reckoning coming."

This week, Democrats will hold a conference call with a Wisconsin college student to talk about student loan cuts and will serve lunch at a District school to highlight the budget's impact on

subsidized school lunches. They will also stage a mock hearing to tar the entire budget as an effort to finance tax cuts for the rich on the backs of the poor.

For a House Republican leadership that has been buffeted by scandal, the stakes in the budget vote are high. House conservatives forced leaders to raise their targeted budget cuts from the \$35 billion figure agreed to this spring to at least \$50 billion. When Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Tex.) was forced to resign as majority leader after his indictment, he adopted the budget fight as a crusade and a way to maintain conservative support.

That has put DeLay's temporary replacement, Majority Whip Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), in a difficult position, leadership aides concede. If Blunt fails to win the budget vote, it will strengthen DeLay's hand if he launches a bid to return to power. DeLay supporters say the Texas Republican would never let such a crucial vote slip away.

But Republican aides said they are gaining confidence that the leadership will narrowly prevail. Although some Democrats have criticized Republicans for seeking \$12 billion in cuts to Medicaid over five years, the proposed policy changes to achieve those savings are defensible, said Sean Spicer, spokesman for the House Republican Conference.

The Medicaid provisions would allow state governments to impose co-payments even on the poorest beneficiaries for emergency room visits for non-emergency health problems and for drug prescriptions not on a list of preferred treatments.

Such changes were proposed this summer by the bipartisan National Governors Association as a way to steer the poor to lower-cost treatments that may be just as effective. "We are trying to manage utilization," said Ray Scheppach, executive director of the governors' group. "The money we save now can help save some [health] coverage during the next economic downturn."

House leaders are also making the case for some of the sweeteners in the bill. A provision to raise funds by auctioning off some of the television broadcasting spectrum would set aside a designated frequency for police, firefighters and other first responders. The House bill also includes a \$1 billion increase in home-heating assistance to low-income families for the coming winter, a provision not matched in the Senate. Leaders are telling balking Republican moderates from the Northeast that the bill will likely be the last chance they have to vote for aid they see as crucial to constituents.